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# **PACER Case Locator (PCL)**

## **User Manual**

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**November 2024**

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## Introduction

The PACER Case Locator (PCL) allows PACER users to search for cases in appellate, bankruptcy, and district courts. The following document will guide you through the updated PCL and show you how it works.

## Index Page & Login

The index page (at [pcl.uscourts.gov](http://pcl.uscourts.gov)) highlights PCL features and updates, provides quick links to other useful sites, and allows you to log in using your PACER credentials.

To log in, click the Log in to PCL button at the top right of the page. This button takes you to the national PACER Login page, where you can enter your username, password, and client code (optional). To make the client code a requirement, go to Manage My Account on [pacer.gov](http://pacer.gov) and select Set PACER Billing Preferences.

**NOTE:** The Client Code Format field will not accept a space or comma in the client code.

You may also go to Manage My Account after you log in to the PCL. Just click My Account in the navigation bar that appears at the top of the page and select Manage My Account.

The Quick Links box is available here and on the Welcome page. It provides links to pages and websites that may help your search.

The image shows two overlapping screenshots of the PACER Case Locator (PCL) website. The top screenshot is the PCL index page, which features the PACER logo at the top, followed by the title "PACER Case Locator". Below the title, there is a brief description of the PCL as a national index for district, bankruptcy, and appellate courts. A "Log in to PCL" button is located in the top right corner. The page includes a "PACER Case Locator Features" section with a bulleted list of features, a "PACER Fees and Case Currency" section, and a "Quick Links" box with icons for PACER, U.S. Courts, Court Links, PCL Help, PACER FAQ, and Statistics. The bottom screenshot is the login page, which has a blue header with the word "Login". It contains a message about cookies and a login form with fields for Username, Password, Client Code, and a dropdown menu for Court. There are "Login" and "Clear" buttons, and links for "Need an account?", "Forgot password?", and "Forgot username?". A disclaimer at the bottom states that the site is a restricted government website for official PACER use only.

## Welcome

Upon successful login, unless you have set another page as your PCL home page, you will see the Welcome page. This is the default home page. To ensure you come directly here when you log in, select the Make this my PCL home page checkbox on the bottom left.

Use the Quick Searches section to go directly to the type of search you want. The My Recently Run Saved Searches section allows you to view up to 10 of your most recent saved searches.

Click **more** on the bottom right to see all your saved searches. You may save up to 100 cases and searches.

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**NOTE:** Older saved searches will appear on this page if they have been run more recently than newer saved searches.

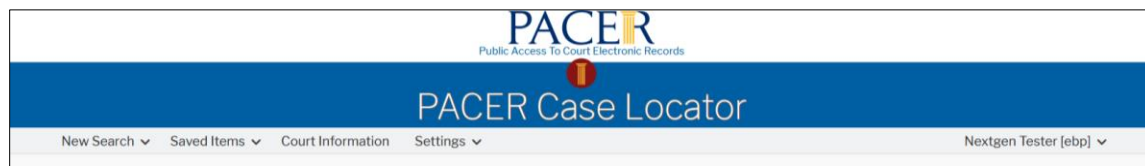
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You can return to this page any time by clicking PACER Case Locator at the top of the screen.



## Navigation Bar

The navigation bar at the top of the screen provides several search and account options.



- **New Search:** Allows the user to begin a search by case or party. It includes the following:
  - Case Search
  - Advanced Case Search
  - Party Search
  - Advanced Party Search
  - Bankruptcy Search
- **Saved Items:** Lists searches and cases you have previously saved for later use. It includes the following:
  - Saved Searches
  - Saved Cases
  - Batch Searches
- **Court Information:** Provides a list of court abbreviations and website links.
- **Settings:** Provides the following selections for users:
  - Change Client Code
  - User Options
- **User dropdown:** Allows the user to access account information. It includes the following:
  - Manage My Account
  - Billing History
  - PACER Home
  - Logout

## New Search

### Case Search page

Perform a case search by using either the basic or advanced option. The basic search allows you to enter a case status, case type, number, title, and/or court type. The advanced option allows you to expand your search by including the court region and/or date range. It also allows you to choose how your search results will appear, using the Sort and Direction dropdowns.

If you do not select a court type, all courts will automatically be included in the search. If you select the appellate, civil, or bankruptcy court types, more fields will appear to help narrow your search.

See the Additional Search Fields by Court Type section below to learn more.

The image shows two versions of the Case Search page. The left version is the 'Case Search' tab, which includes fields for Court Type, Case Number, Case Title, Case Type, and Case Status. The right version is the 'Advanced Case Search' tab, which includes all the fields from the basic search plus 'Region' and 'Date Range' (with 'Date Filed' and 'Date Closed' sub-sections). Both versions include a 'NOTE' about data availability and a 'Make this my PCL home page' checkbox.

The image shows the 'Sort Results' section of the 'Advanced Case Search' page. It includes a note that 'Sort Field' and 'Direction' must be used together, and dropdown menus for both. The 'Sort Field' dropdown is set to 'Case Number' and the 'Direction' dropdown is set to 'Ascending'. The 'NOTE' at the bottom states: 'Newly filed cases will typically appear on this system within 24 hours. Check the Court Information page for data that is currently available on the PCL. The most recent data is available directly from the court.'

In the advanced search, you may use the Map link next to the Region field to select where you want to search.

The screenshot displays the 'Advanced Case Search' interface. At the top, there are navigation links: 'New Search', 'Saved Items', 'Court Information', and 'Settings'. Below these, the 'Case Search' tab is active, with a sub-tab for 'Advanced Case Search'. The 'Case Information' section includes a red asterisk note: '\* At least one is required.' The filters are as follows: 'Court Type' is set to 'All'; 'Case' has fields for 'Number' and 'Title'; 'Type' is set to 'All'; 'Case Status' is set to 'All'; and 'Region' is set to 'Region' with a 'Map' link. The 'Date Range' section has 'Date Filed' and 'Date Closed' fields, each with a calendar icon. The 'Sort Results' section has a red asterisk note: '\*\* Sort Field and Direction must be used together.' and fields for 'Sort Field' and 'Direction'. A 'NOTE' at the bottom states: 'NOTE: Newly filed cases will typically appear on this system within 24 hours. Check the Court Information page for data that is currently available on the PCL. The most recent data is available directly from the court.' At the bottom are 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons. On the right, a 'United States Courts' map is shown, with states color-coded and numbered 1 through 11. A 'Close' button is at the bottom of the map.

After you enter the information, click Search to continue. To change the information you have entered, either highlight the text in the field you want to change or click Clear to start over.

If you use either of these pages often and want to go directly to one of them when you log in, select the Make this my PCL home page checkbox.

## Party Search

Perform a party search by using either the basic or advanced options. The basic search allows you to enter the party name, party role, and/or court type. It also includes the Exact Matches Only and the Match Empty First and Middle Names checkboxes.

When you select Exact Matches Only, the Match Empty First and Middle Names checkbox is enabled. Party role codes are created and assigned by individual courts. This dropdown list includes the 30 most common party role codes.

If you do not select a specific court type, the Court Type field will default to all courts.

The screenshot shows the 'Party Search' interface with the 'Party Information' section active. It includes fields for 'Last Name or Entity Name', 'First Name', and 'Middle Name'. There are checkboxes for 'Exact Matches Only' and 'Match Empty First and Middle Names'. Below these are dropdown menus for 'Party Role' and 'Court Type' (set to 'All'). A note at the bottom states: 'NOTE: Newly filed cases will typically appear on this system within 24 hours. Check the Court Information page for data that is currently available on the PCL. The most recent data is available directly from the court.'

The advanced option allows you to expand your search to include case status, case number, region and/or date range. This page will allow you to search by party name and/or case number. It also allows you to choose how your search results will appear, using the Sort and Direction dropdowns.

If you do not select a court type, all courts will automatically be included in the search. If you select the appellate, civil, or bankruptcy court types, more fields will appear to help narrow your search.

The screenshot shows the 'Advanced Party Search' interface. It includes the 'Party Information' section with name fields and checkboxes. Below is the 'Case Information' section with dropdowns for 'Court Type', 'Case Number', 'Case Type', 'Case Status', and 'Region'. The 'Date Range' section has fields for 'Date Filed' and 'Date Closed' with calendar icons and preset filters like 'Prior Month', 'Prior Six Months', and 'Prior Year'. The 'Sort Results' section has dropdowns for 'Sort Field' and 'Direction'. A note at the bottom is identical to the basic search form. 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons are at the bottom.



In the advanced search, you may use the Map link next to the Region field to select where you want to search.

The screenshot displays the 'Advanced Party Search' interface. On the left, there are several filter sections: 'Party Information' with fields for 'Last Name or Entity Name' and 'First Name', and 'Party Role'; 'Case Information' with dropdowns for 'Court Type', 'Case Number', 'Case Type', 'Case Status', and 'Region'; and 'Date Range' with 'Date Filed' and 'Date Closed' filters. Below these is a 'Sort Results' section with 'Sort Field' and 'Direction' dropdowns. On the right, a 'United States Courts' map is shown, with states color-coded and numbered 1 through 11. A 'Close' button is located at the bottom of the map. The interface includes various help icons and validation messages.

See the Additional Search Fields by Court Type section below to learn more.

After you enter the information, click Search to continue. To change the information you have entered, either highlight the text in the field you want to change, or click Clear to clear all the information you entered and start over.

If you use either of these pages often and want to go directly to it when you log in, select the Make this my PCL home page checkbox.

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**NOTE:** A last name is required if you enter something in the First Name or Middle Name field, OR when you enter something in the Four Digit SSN field.

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## Bankruptcy Search

This page allows you to search for a bankruptcy party by Social Security or Employer Identification/Tax Identification number, and by last name or business name.

The screenshot shows the 'Bankruptcy Search' form. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Party Search' and 'Bankruptcy Search'. The form is titled 'Tax Identification Information' and includes a link for 'Party Search | Advanced Bankruptcy Search'. A red asterisk indicates 'Required information'. The form has two main sections: 'SSN or EIN' with a text input field and a help icon, and 'Party' with a 'Last Name or Entity Name' text input field, 'First Name' and 'Middle Name' text input fields, and two checkboxes: 'Exact Matches Only' and 'Match Empty First and Middle Names'. Below these fields is a 'NOTE' stating: 'Newly filed cases will typically appear on this system within 24 hours. Check the Court Information page for data that is currently available on the PCL. The most recent data is available directly from the court.' At the bottom, there are 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons, and a checkbox labeled 'Make this my PCL home page.'.

If you use either of these pages often and want to go directly to it when you log in, select the Make this my PCL home page checkbox.

## Additional Search Fields by Court Type

You may search the PCL for case information in many ways. When running an advanced case or party search, additional search fields will appear depending on the court type you select when running an advanced search.

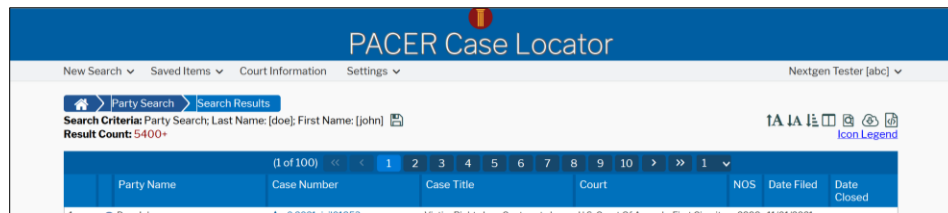
- **Civil and appellate:** Nature of Suit field
- **Bankruptcy:** Chapter, Date Discharged, and Date Dismissed fields


The screenshot shows the 'Advanced Case Search' form. It has a navigation bar with 'Case Search' and 'Advanced Case Search'. The form is titled 'Case Information' and includes a link for 'Basic Case Search'. A red asterisk indicates 'At least one is required.' The form has several sections: 'Court Type' with a dropdown menu, 'Case' with 'Number' and 'Title' text input fields, 'Type' with a dropdown menu, 'Case Status' with a dropdown menu, 'Region' with a dropdown menu and a 'Map' link, and 'Nature of Suit' with a dropdown menu. Below these is a 'Date Range' section with 'Date Filed' and 'Date Closed' date pickers, each with 'Prior Month', 'Prior Six Months', and 'Prior Year' links. At the bottom, there is a 'Sort Results' section with a red asterisk indicating 'Sort Field and Direction must be used together.' and two dropdown menus for 'Sort Field' and 'Direction'. Below the sort section is a 'NOTE' stating: 'Newly filed cases will typically appear on this system within 24 hours. Check the Court Information page for data that is currently available on the PCL. The most recent data is available directly from the court.' At the bottom, there are 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons, and a checkbox labeled 'Make this my PCL home page.'.


The screenshot shows the 'Advanced Party Search' form. It has a navigation bar with 'Party Search' and 'Advanced Party Search'. The form is titled 'Party Information' and includes a link for 'Basic Party Search | Bankruptcy Search'. A red asterisk indicates 'At least one is required.' and a red double asterisk indicates 'To use this field, you must also enter a last name or entity name.' The form has several sections: 'Party' with 'Last Name or Entity Name', 'First Name', and 'Middle Name' text input fields, and two checkboxes: 'Exact Matches Only' and 'Match Empty First and Middle Names'; 'Party Role' with a dropdown menu; 'Four Digit SSN' with a text input field; and 'SSN or EIN' with a text input field. Below these is a 'Case Information' section with 'Court Type' (set to 'Bankruptcy'), 'Case' (with 'Number' and 'Title' text input fields), 'Type' with a dropdown menu, 'Case Status' with a dropdown menu, 'Region' with a dropdown menu and a 'Map' link, and 'Chapter' with a dropdown menu. Below this is a 'Date Range' section with 'Date Filed', 'Date Closed', 'Date Dismissed', and 'Date Discharged' date pickers, each with 'Prior Month', 'Prior Six Months', and 'Prior Year' links. At the bottom, there is a 'Sort Results' section with a red double asterisk indicating 'Sort Field and Direction must be used together.' and two dropdown menus for 'Sort Field' and 'Direction'. Below the sort section is a 'NOTE' stating: 'Newly filed cases will typically appear on this system within 24 hours. Check the Court Information page for data that is currently available on the PCL. The most recent data is available directly from the court.' At the bottom, there are 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons.


## Search Results

Both the case and party Search Results screens allow you to perform several different tasks. The icon legend below the search results outlines those tasks.





 **Save icon:** Allows you to save results to the Saved Searches section in the navigation bar


 **Enlarge/reduce font icon:** Allows you to control the font size of your results

 **Sort icon:** Allows you to sort your search results by the column selected


 **Column icon:** Allows you to select which columns you want to display

 **Refine icon:** Allows you to refine your search

 **Download icon:** Allows you to download your search results

 **Save case icon:** Allows you to save a case to the Save Cases section in the navigation bar

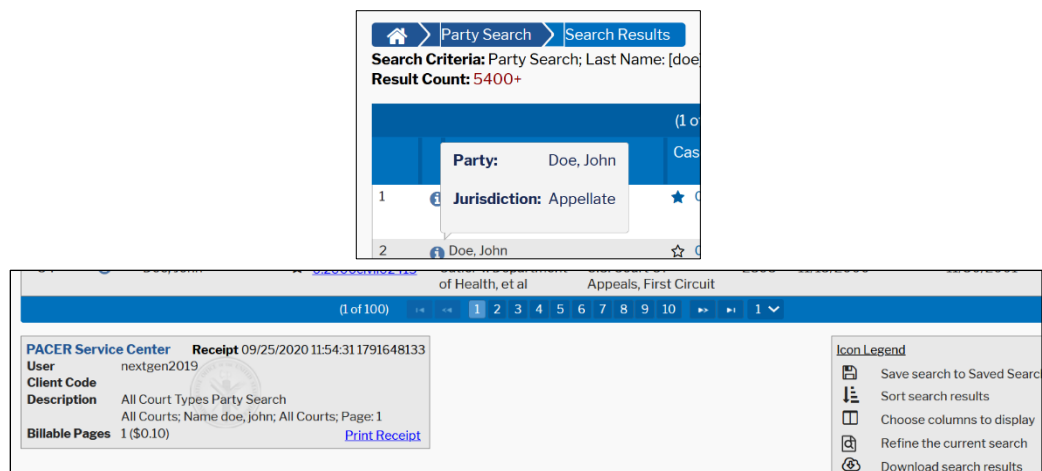
 **Remove case icon:** Allows you to remove a case from the Saved Cases section

 **Show case parties icon:** Allows you to see the parties involved in a case

The search results display one page at a time by default. You may download all search results to a file in XML, JSON, or CSV formats.

When you roll over the “i” icon on the Case Search page, additional case information appears (e.g., jurisdiction, nature of suit, chapter, disposition, etc.).

A receipt at the bottom left of the screen shows the number of billable pages and the cost for the data on the current viewable page only. It does not include the cost for previously viewed pages.



If a search yields more than 5,400 results, you will have the option to run a batch search. For more information on batch jobs, see the Batch Searches section below. When a search yields fewer than 5,400 results, you can sort the information by case title, case number, court, date filed, and date closed. You may use the sort icon at the top right of the results to sort your results, or you may also select which columns to view using the table icon.



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**NOTE:** Sorting your results prompts a new search that likely will be billable. A notice of the fee will appear, prompting you to either continue or cancel the search.

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## Saved Items

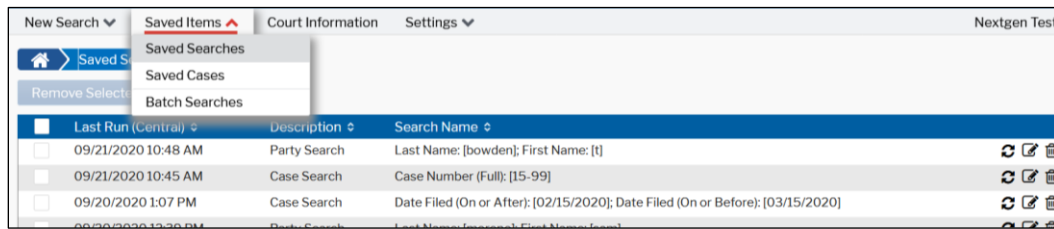
### Saved Searches

The Search Results screen allows you to save your searches for later use. To save, select the disk icon on the Search Criteria line.

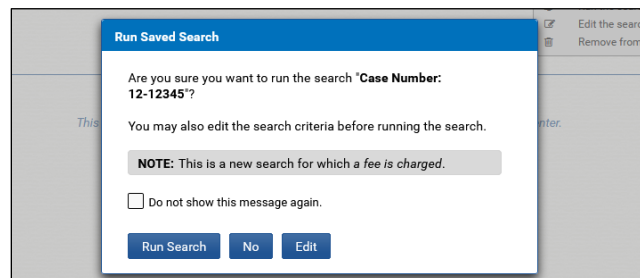


To go to your saved searches, click Saved Items on the navigation bar and select Saved Searches.

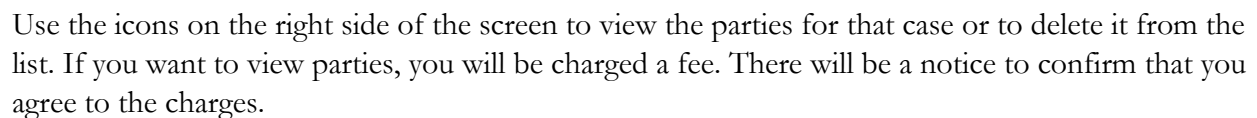
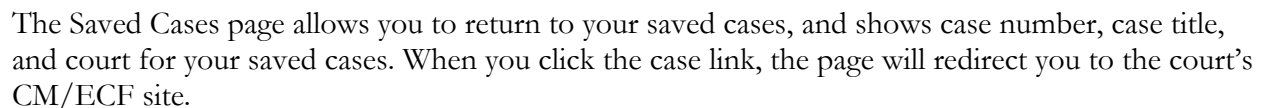
The Saved Searches page allows you to return to your previous searches, showing when you last ran the search, the type of search, and the criteria you used to run the search. Use the icons on the right side of the screen to either rerun, edit, or delete your search from the list.



If you want to rerun the search, you will be charged a fee. There will be a notice to confirm you agree to the charges.



The Search Results screen gives you the option to save any case for later use. Select the star icon in the Case Number column to save. When you click the star, a pop-up box appears, allowing you to enter comments about the case. Click Save Case, and the star next to the case will turn yellow, indicating you have saved the item. If you click the yellow star, the item will be removed from your saved cases.



## Batch Searches

Batch searches allow you to run a large search that returns results that can be downloaded as a file. The batch search icon appears at the top right when you receive more than 5,400 results. This search is limited to 100,000 results, and no fee is charged until the results are downloaded.

When the search results page first loads, a notice will inform you that maximum results have been exceeded, and provides further instruction on how to proceed.

The screenshot shows a search results page with a dialog box titled "Maximum Results Exceeded". The dialog box contains the following text:

Your search yielded more than **5400** results.

The search results shown are limited to the first **5400** results. There are potentially many more results that are not shown.

On the search results page, you have the option to:

- Work with the first **5400** results. However, the option to sort columns is not available.
- **Refine** your search to reduce the number of search results.
- Run your search as a **batch job** that will return all results, which must be downloaded as a file.

**NOTE:** Batch searches are limited to 108,000 results. No fee is charged until the search results are downloaded.

The dialog box has an "OK" button. In the background, the search results page is visible, showing a table with columns: Party Name, Case Number, Case Title, Court, Date Filed, and Date Closed. A button labeled "Run current search as a batch job" is highlighted in the top right corner of the search results page.

When you select the batch search icon, you may name the search for later use when you select Batch Searches from the Saved Items dropdown.

The screenshot shows the "Saved Items" dropdown menu with the following options:

- Saved Searches
- Saved Cases
- Batch Searches

Below the dropdown menu, there is a table of saved searches with the following columns: Job ID, Name, Started, Expires (Central), Pages, and Status.

Job ID	Name	Started	Expires (Central)	Pages	Status
300001000	Party Search; Last Name: [patterson]	09/25/2020 3:03 PM		0	RUNNING

Below the table, there is a button labeled "Remove Selected Searches".

## Court Information

This page provides a list of the court abbreviations used by the PCL. Click on the link to go directly to the court's website.

**NOTE:** The Coverage Date column shows the date from which a court has daily case access available. This may be different from the date that appears in the Earliest Cases column.

PACER Case Locator					
New Search		Saved Items	Court Information	Settings	Nextgen Tester [abc]
Court Information					
(1 of 6) 1 2 3 4 5 6 >> 50 Filter					
Court	Court Code	Court Type	Earliest Cases	Most Recent Cases	Coverage Date
Alabama Middle Bankruptcy Court	almbk	Bankruptcy	09/02/1985	02/08/2022	09/02/1985
Alabama Middle District Court	almdc	Criminal	09/08/1966	02/07/2022	07/11/1994
Alabama Middle District Court	almdc	Civil	09/08/1966	02/07/2022	04/02/1991
Alabama Northern Bankruptcy Court	alnbk	Bankruptcy	04/24/1909	02/08/2022	12/02/1962
Alabama Northern District Court	alndc	Criminal	03/10/1963	02/07/2022	11/01/1987
Alabama Northern District Court	alndc	Civil	03/10/1963	02/07/2022	01/05/1986
Alabama Southern Bankruptcy Court	alsbk	Bankruptcy	04/27/1978	02/08/2022	03/31/1988
Alabama Southern District Court	alsdc	Criminal	03/26/1963	02/08/2022	05/21/1992
Alabama Southern District Court	alsdc	Civil	03/26/1963	02/08/2022	02/03/1983
Alaska Bankruptcy Court	akbk	Bankruptcy	02/15/1980	02/03/2022	12/06/1990
Alaska District Court	akdc	Criminal	02/26/1960	02/08/2022	01/01/1996
Alaska District Court	akdc	Civil	02/26/1960	02/08/2022	01/31/1968
Arizona Bankruptcy Court	azbk	Bankruptcy	12/31/1954	02/08/2022	03/01/1980
Arizona District Court	azdc	Criminal	07/31/1958	02/08/2022	09/15/1987
Arizona District Court	azdc	Civil	07/31/1958	02/08/2022	11/02/1986
Arkansas Eastern Bankruptcy Court	arebk	Bankruptcy	09/11/1978	02/08/2022	10/10/1983
Arkansas Eastern District Court	aredc	Criminal	07/07/1966	02/08/2022	04/09/1989
Arkansas Eastern District Court	aredc	Civil	07/07/1966	02/08/2022	04/02/1986
Arkansas Western Bankruptcy Court	arwbk	Bankruptcy	12/17/1979	02/08/2022	02/03/1985
Arkansas Western District Court	arwdc	Criminal	11/04/1969	02/08/2022	10/14/1996



## Settings

### Change Client Code

The Change Client Code option allows you to update the client code already entered, or enter a client code to track charges for future billings. The client code will appear in your billing history details when entered prior to a search.

When you click Change Client Code, enter the code in the Client Code field and click Submit.

The screenshot shows a web application interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: 'New Search', 'Saved Items', 'Court Information', 'Settings', and 'Nextgen Tester'. The 'Settings' menu is open, showing 'Change Client Code' and 'User Options'. Below the navigation bar, there is a 'Welcome' button and a 'Quick Searches' section. The 'Change Client Code' modal is open, displaying the following content:

- Change Client Code** (modal title)
- Current Client Code:**
- Logged in as Nextgen Tester** (with a user icon)
- Client Code** (label) followed by a text input field.
- Submit** and **Clear** buttons.
- Not Nextgen Tester?** (text) followed by a link: [Click here to log in as a different user.](#)

## User Options

This section allows users to further customize their landing page, hide system messages, and select which columns they want to appear on the search results page. Click the button(s) and/or checkbox(es) in each section to make your selection; then click Update Settings.

**PACER Case Locator**

New Search ▾ Saved Items ▾ Court Information Settings ▾ Nextgen Test

**User Options**

**Landing Page**  
Choose one of the items below as your landing page to which you are directed upon login.

☐ Default Landing Page ☐ Advanced Case Search  
☐ Advanced Party Search ☐ Bankruptcy Search  
☐ Batch Searches ☐ Case Search  
☐ Court Information ☒ Party Search  
☐ Saved Cases ☐ Saved Searches  
☐ Welcome Page

**Hide System Messages**  
Choose the system messages you would like to hide.

☐ Delete Batch Jobs ☐ Delete Saved Case  
☐ Delete Saved Search ☒ Maximum Search Results  
☐ Refine Search Criteria ☐ Run Saved Search  
☐ Show Case Parties ☐ Show Saved Case Parties

**Saved Cases**  
Choose the saved cases columns you would like displayed.

☒ Case Comment ☒ Court Name

**Search Results**  
Choose how you would like search results to be displayed.

☒ Display Full Case Title  
☒ Display Full Court Name  
☒ Display Full Party Name

**Search Results Columns**  
Choose the search results columns you would like displayed by default.

☐ Bankruptcy Chapter ☐ Bankruptcy Disposition  
☐ Court Type ☒ Date Closed  
☐ Date Discharged ☐ Date Dismissed  
☒ Date Filed ☐ Date Recopened  
☒ Nature of Suit (NOS) ☒ Row Number

**Search Results Font Size**  
Choose the initial font size for search results.

☐ Small ☒ Medium ☐ Large

Smith v. Jones  
Smith v. Jones  
Smith v. Jones  
Smith v. Jones  
Smith v. Jones  
Smith v. Jones  
Smith v. Jones  
Smith v. Jones  
Smith v. Jones  
Smith v. Jones

[Update Settings](#)

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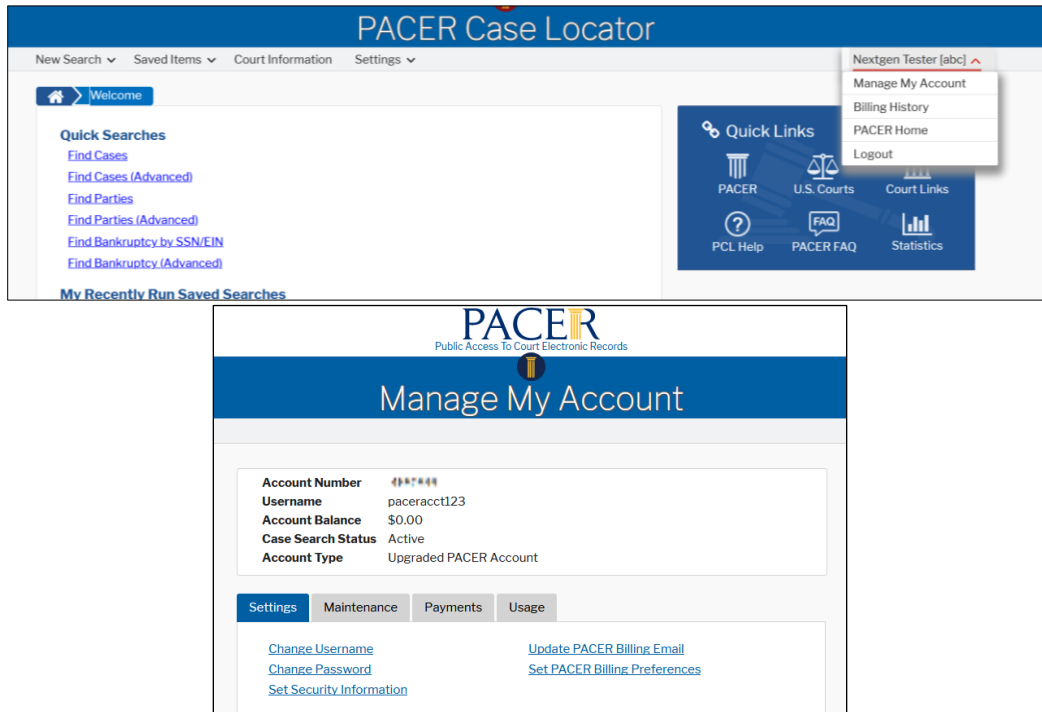
**NOTE:** The default options in the Search Results Columns section are only for the variably available columns. Columns such as Case Title, Case Number, and Court will always be shown.

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## User Dropdown

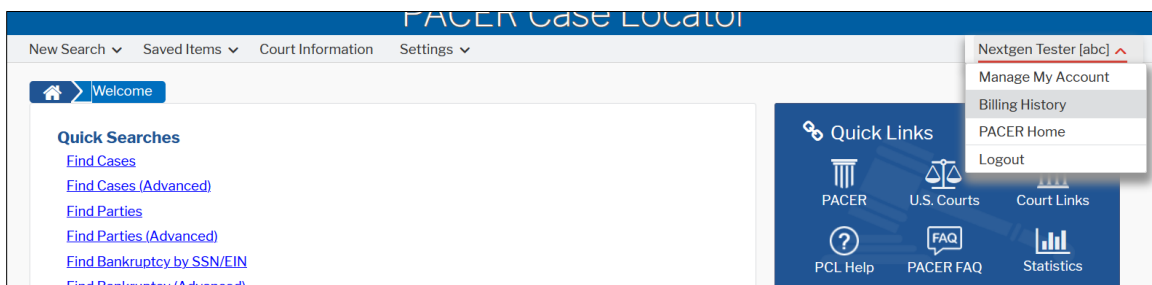
### Manage My Account

Use the My Account section of the navigation bar to access details of your PACER account. When you select Manage My Account from the dropdown and log in, the screen below should appear.



### Billing History

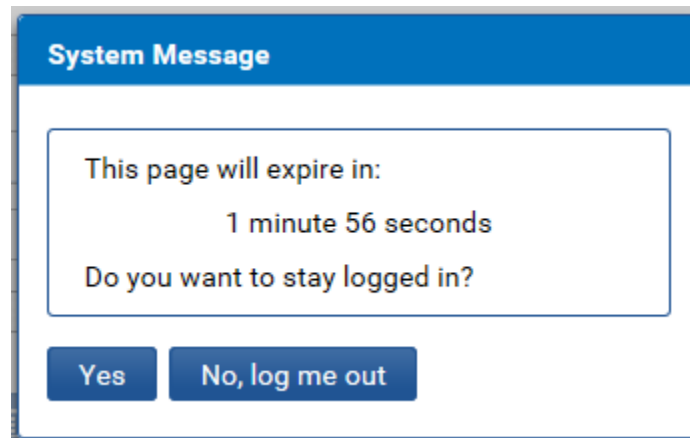
The Billing History option takes you to the Billing History screen in Manage My Account. Here you can view transactions for one or all courts during a selected time period sorted by date, client code, or court.



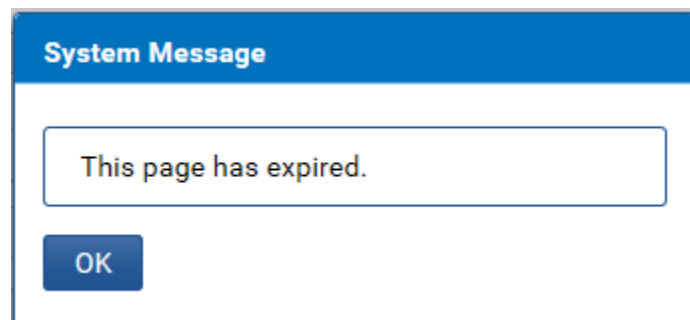


## Page Expiration

When idle for 30 minutes on a page other than results (case or party search, saved items, etc.), the user will receive an expired page message. Click OK on the message to remain on the same page.



When idle for 30 minutes on a **results page**, the user will receive an expired page message. Clicking OK on this message redirects the user to their home page.



## PCL Application Programing Interface (API)

The public PCL API allows users to programmatically search the PCL for federal cases or associated parties. This API uses the same search functionality as the PCL application and searches the same data set.

The API and documentation is available on the [Developer Resources](#) page. You can test in the QA environment at <https://qa-pacer.uscourts.gov/>.<sup>\*</sup> You may also test your scripts in QA as part of your development lifecycle process or as needed.

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**NOTE:** QA is a testing site that may occasionally be unavailable due maintenance. Also, some features for testing may not currently be available in the production environment.

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You must have a PACER account to use the QA environment. To register for a PACER test account, visit <https://qa-pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/pscof/registration.jsf>. There is no charge for QA searches, so you may skip the credit card portion of the registration. Your QA account will be activated overnight.